

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE MINIMIZED IN LEE COUNTY TIRE FIRE

KEOKUK — Quick response by state and local emergency response personnel minimized the environmental impact of a Nov. 17 tire fire near Keokuk, but DNR officials warned that the next fire might not produce the same fortunate outcome.

The fire broke out around 3 p.m. Sunday at a farmstead 2.5 miles west of Keokuk when a brush fire spread to a nearby ravine, where about 50,000 old tires had been dumped. Stacy Johnston, the farmstead's owner who was tending the brush fire, said he was unable to control the fire once the tires ignited.

Local firefighters and DNR emergency response personnel fought the blaze until extinguishing it early Monday morning. Shane Dodge, a DNR environmental specialist, said environmental impact to water resources in the area, including the nearby Des Moines River, was averted because all water runoff was contained or absorbed in the immediate area of the ravine.

DNR Environmental Specialist Mel Pins, manager of a statewide tire management program that recently has completed a six-year effort to clean up more than 9.5 million tires statewide, said the DNR was unaware of the stockpile's existence and that Iowa's environment dodged a bullet.

"This could have been much worse," Pins said. "A stockpile of 50,000 tires is significant, and it could have caused serious harm to the environment. It's an example of how improper disposal, even if from years ago, can cause environmental problems today."

Iowa law has prohibited the land disposal of tires since 1991. Johnston said the tires already had been dumped in the ravine when he purchased the property about a year ago. Open burning of tires in any form also is prohibited.

Tire fires can have serious effects on the environment. Burning tires release petroleum by-products that can contaminate soils and groundwater, and large amounts of potentially harmful combustion products are released into the air.

In addition, tire fires usually are long lasting and extremely difficult to extinguish. Dodge said that foam and water from the local fire department response was not enough to extinguish the blaze. A local company, Keokuk Contractor, used a bulldozer to move soils to cover the tires, allowing firefighters to get the fire under control.

“The location of the tires within a steep ravine made it difficult to get to the burning tires,” he said. “The best method to prevent the fire from spreading was to smother the tires with clay soils.”

The DNR continues to analyze soil samples recovered down slope from the tire fire area to ensure no residual contamination remains.

Tire stockpiles present other environmental concerns besides the potential for fire. Discarded tires hold stagnant water that is an excellent breeding ground for the type of mosquitoes that carry West Nile Virus. Pins said citizens need to be vigilant in their disposal methods to prevent future problems.

“It only costs a dollar or two to properly dispose of a tire,” Pins said. “Dumping a tire in a ditch or ravine can result in many other economic and environmental costs down the road.”

Pins said citizens and businesses should leave old tires with their tire dealers, or check with their local landfill or recycling center for disposal options.

For more information, or for more on proper tire management, contact Mel Pins at (515) 281-8489, or by e-mail at mel.pins@dnr.state.ia.us.

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PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT FOR WATER QUALITY AT UPPER PINE LAKE

DES MOINES — Plans for improving water quality at Upper Pine Lake in Hardin County are open for public comment through Dec. 6.

A draft TMDL — or Total Maximum Daily Load — has been developed for Upper Pine Lake. TMDLs are calculations used to determine how much of a pollutant a water body can receive and still maintain its designated use such as maintaining aquatic life, allowing body contact such as swimming or being used as a drinking water supply.

TMDLs also include plans on how water quality can be improved through conservation efforts in the respective watersheds. After receiving public comment, the TMDLs will be forwarded to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for final approval.

Upper Pine Lake is impaired by siltation. The lake's designated use is maintaining aquatic life for fishing. A project resulting in extensive watershed improvements being made through the cooperation of private landowners was completed in the 1990s, along with renovation of both Upper and Lower Pine Lakes including dredging.

The DNR and Natural Resource Conservation Service have identified bed and streambank erosion as the significant sediment sources now. Recommendations made by the DNR for improving water quality at Upper Pine Lake include:

- Install check dams on smaller tributaries to reduce peak flows during runoff events.
- Install stream bank protection using vegetation and graded rock.
- Stabilize stream banks by shaping and removing overhangs.

The TMDL also recommends continued efforts to reduce soil erosion from row crop fields in the watershed with particular emphasis on fields close to the lake and feeder streams having steeper slopes without effective management practices in place. Suggested controls include:

- Management practices that will increase crop residue such as no-till farming,
- Construct terraces and grassed waterways.
- Install buffer strips along stream corridors.
- Construct grade stabilization structures to reduce head cutting and gully expansion.

The draft TMDLs can be obtained and comments can be made using the following sources:

- Internet — [Http://www.state.ia.us/dnr/organiza/epd/wtresrce/303dnote.htm](http://www.state.ia.us/dnr/organiza/epd/wtresrce/303dnote.htm)
- E-mail — william.graham@dnr.state.ia.us
- Telephone by calling William Graham at (515) 281-5917
- Mail by writing: William Graham%Iowa DNR
- Wallace State Office Building
- Des Moines, Iowa 50319

For more information, contact William Graham at (515) 281-5917 or Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395.

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DNR SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON MASTER MATRIX, LIVESTOCK RULE CHANGES

DES MOINES – The DNR will host 27 meetings on Dec. 5 and one meeting on Dec. 6, to collect comments on proposed rule changes affecting livestock operations. The rule package includes the “master matrix,” designed for counties to use when evaluating the proposed sites of large confinement operations.

The public meetings will be held simultaneously over the Iowa Communications Network from 1 to 4 p.m. at 17 locations. Additional meetings will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. at 10 ICN locations. (See list below.)

“We’ve added 16 meeting locations since the original notice was published last week, because there is so much interest in this topic,” said Robin Puisner, coordinator of DNR animal feeding rules development.

Some of the locations are relatively small, so those who plan to attend a meeting should pre-register by calling the DNR at (515) 281-8941, Puisner said.

Oral comments will be accepted, but written comments are preferred at any of the meetings. Comments should address the proposed rule changes.

The master matrix is a scoring system for ranking large confinement site locations. It was developed by consensus of ten groups ranging from county government to commodity groups to universities and environmental groups.

“This will not be an informational meeting; but an opportunity for people to provide input, especially on the minimum score that producers must have and if there should be minimum scores for air quality, water quality and community impacts,” Puisner said.

The proposed rule changes are available on the DNR website at <http://www.state.ia.us/dnr/organiza/epd/wastewtr/feedlot/changes.htm> or by calling (515) 281-8941.

The DNR will accept comments until Dec. 6, 2002. Send comments to Robin Puisner, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034; or fax to (515) 281-8895. Comments can also be submitted through the website.

A public meeting will be held at all ICN locations below (except Johnston) from 1 to 4 p.m. Ten of the following sites have a 6 to 9 p.m. meeting, too.

Adair (also 6 to 9 p.m.), modular building on south side of Adair-Casey High School, 3384 Indigo Avenue

Carroll (also 6 to 9 p.m.), Room 175, Kuemper High School, 109 S. Clark

Des Moines, Department of Economic Development, 200 East Grand Avenue

Eddyville (also 6 to 9 p.m.), Room 44, Eddyville-Blakesburg Jr-Sr High School, 1301 Berdan St.

Fairfield, Room 16, Fairfield High School, 605 E Broadway

Hull (*replaced Sioux Center*), Room 165, Boyden-Hull Jr-Sr High School, 801 1st St.

Humboldt (also 6 to 9 p.m.), Public Library, 30 6th Street, North

Independence, Room 123, Independence Community High School, 514 5th Avenue SE

Iowa Falls (also 6 to 9 p.m.), Room S217, Iowa Falls High School, 1903 North Taylor

Johnston (6-9 p.m. only) McElroy Room, Iowa Public Television – 1, 6450 Corporate Drive

Maquoketa (also 6 to 9 p.m.), Alternative High School Bldg., Maquoketa High School, 600 Washington

Mason City, Rooms 128 & 129, Careers Building, North Iowa Area Community College – 2, 500 College Dr.

Moville (also 6 to 9 p.m.), Interactive Video Room, Woodbury Central High School, 408 S 4th St.

Osceola (also 6 to 9 p.m.), Public Library, 300 S Filmore St.

Red Oak, Room 116, Red Oak Center Room, Southwestern Community College – 1, 2300 4th St.

Spencer, Spencer High School, 800 East 3rd St.

Tiffin, Clear Creek-Amana High School, 311 W. Marengo Road

West Union (also 6 to 9 p.m.), North Fayette High School, North Pine St.

There will also be a public hearing in Des Moines from 1 to 5 p.m. on Dec. 6 in the auditorium of the Wallace State Office Building, 502 E 9th Street.

For more information, contact Robin Pruisner at (515) 281-8690.